

**Letter from Gen. Jackson to Mr. Southard [Together with Mr. Southard's answer]
[1827].**

Ac. A21. Ac. 421

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Letter from Gen. Jackson , to Mr. Southard.

No. 2.

Hermitage Janry 5th , 1827.

Sir

Being informed through a friend that at the table of Mr Jno. S. W i e lford of Fredericksburgh Virginia, the following conversation took place between you & Doctor J. H. Wallace, to wit, you asked Doctor Wallace upon what ground he supported the election of Genl, Jackson to the Presidency , . with other reasons, the Doctor mentioned my services during the late war, to which you replied, *that Mr Monroe and not Genl Jackson was entitled to the credit for the victory at New-Orleans—that just before our troops were ordered to New-Orleans Genl, Jackson left the army and was returning home when Mr Monroe sent him a preremtory order to return to the defence of that place , —and that this, with other energetic measures of Mr Monroe was the salvation of New Orleans.* Colo. Gray of that place who was present, asked *where could that order be found* remarking— *that it would be of — importance” Mr Southard said —he did not know, but he had been informed such order was ? i ssued and did exist.*

I have thought it my duty, not less to my own character, than to the high and responsible situation which you occupy, to address you stating the facts precisely as they have been communicated to me—a charge of so serious a nature as that implied in your declarations, as stated, to Doctor Wallace, it cannot be expected of me to pass without some notice, especially as it seems to be adopted as true by an executive branch of our government—and as an act of Justice you cannot be surprised when I demand of you the name of your informer, or the source thro which you have felt yourself warrented in making this statement; which I am compelled from principles of truth, to pronon u nce false and unfounded, and that nothing during my military command ever happened like it—nor can it be said with truth, that I ever left my army, or ever slept one night beyond the limits of my camp, so long as I had one—or that I ever was on the sick report, or asked for leave of absence during the whole time I held a military command

I have enclosed this letter to my friend Genl Houston, with the request that he present it to you, and enclose your reply—which I have no doubt, you will promptly make

I have the honor to be very respectfully yr mo, obdt, servt, ANDREW JACKSON

The Honble Saml Southard Sec of the Navy.

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Mr. Southard's Answer.

Sir

Your unsealed letter of the 5th Jany was handed to me, in my Office, on the 3rd of this month, by Genl. Houston, with the remark, that he had received it as an enclosure from you, on the preceding day. Disposed to regard it *only* as an enquiry, dicta?ed by the persuasion, that you have been injured, and feeling that I have done you no intentional wrong, I cheerfully give such explanation as is in my power.

About the first of July last, I was at the private table of my friend John S. Wellford, in Fredericksburg, in company with five or six of his immediate neighbors, who, I believe, had been invited to spend an hour or two with me after the cloth was removed. There was much conversation on a variety of subjects occasionally, political. That part of it which related to Mr. Monroe and yourself, was probably the foundation of the tale which has been borne to you. You will perceive, from the time & place, that it was, in no aspect, official. I do not profess to have a very distinct recollection of every part of it—particularly of the language used—No effort was made to retain it in my memory because I was not aware of the presence of any one who would seize such a time & occasion to treasure it up, for future use. I can rely on memory however, for the substance of what was said.

I cannot recollect that I asked Dr. Wallace upon “what ground he supported the election of General Jackson to the Presidency”—The question would have been superfluous, as the Doctor's habit of talking upon that subject, has rendered the enquiry unnecessary, for any one who has fallen in with him, at least, since his visit to Washington during the winter before last.

I am also satisfied that he did not then, or at any time, state “other reasons,” besides “your services during the late war”—as I feel very sure, that he has never, in my presence, given any other than one reason for his choice—The battle of New Orleans.

I have no hesitation in denying to you the statements of my remarks, as they are presented in your letter—and assuring you, that I have never charged you with neglect or desertion of your military duties—nor denied to you the merit & glory of fighting the battle of New Orleans. But as a conversation relating to that subject did occur, at the private table of Mr. Wellford, and as it may have been misunderstood, & has certainly been misrepresented, I think proper to give you my recollection of it—and feel the more confidence in my correctness because I then intended to express what I have frequently expressed elsewhere, & what I have always believed to be in conformity with the truth of history.

The conversation was, on this point, commenced & principally sustained by others. In its progress some one, probably Dr. Wallace, remarked that the battle of N. Orleans was proof that Genl

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Letter from Gen. Jackson to Mr. Southard.

No. 3.

Hermitage 6th of March 1827.

Sir

I have recd your letter of the 9th ? It, in answer to mine of the 5th of January under cover of your subsequent letter of the 16th of February.

On the receipt of the written statement of Dr. Wallace, affirmed to be substantially true by Mr Johnston who was present, I addressed you, and from the high & dignified station which you then, & still hold, I had a right to expect a frank & candid answer giving the source thro which you derived information so positively expressed, & where the order issued by Mr Monroe, that brought me to Neworleans was to be found,—This from one of the heads of the Department of our goverment was not too much to look for. I had not asked for your historical knowledge, or for your opinion of Doctor Wallace, or of Mr. Johnston *who is not a neighbour o ? f Mr Wellford* as advised, or any other gentlemen who were present, believing that all must have been gentlemen & men of truth who were associated with you at the party. I asked you for a frank answer, not an argumentative one which to my mind always carries with it the want of sincerity. As you are at the head of that chivalric corps, the Navy, to whose exploits the glory of our country is so much indebted, I believed that you would have answered just as one of those high minded honorable men would on such an occasion , but I have been disappointed. You deny any intention, however, to injure me, whilst you profess to have no distinct recollection of the language used. Whether the *unofficial "aspeet" of the time and place "* shall

excuse your memory, or weaken the statement of the Doctor, it is not my business to determine; I cannot suppose that you meant to intimate that the stamp of official or unofficial can affect the obligation of honorable men on all occasions to speak truly and act justly, whether at wine drinkings or at the bureaus of state—It is a matter of much regret to me that the variance between your statement, & that of the gentlemen named, does not enable me to act understandingly on the subject; it was to avoid this situation that I requested Genl Houston to receive your statement, and thus save me the trouble of sending a copy to those gentlemen, which Justice now requires should be done. I feel sorry therefore that you could not deliver your communication unsealed to Genl Houston.

As my enquiry was dictated by the persuasion that my character was injured by the statement presented through Dr Wallace:—& its *only* object to expose those who wilfully misrepresented it, especially should they be high in authority like yourself, I shall add a few remarks upon your historical knowledge, & your reply to the question you acknowledge to have been asked by Colo, Gray, & your answer. Had your recollection not proved very bad as it relates to the history of the times & to myself "*verbal, written, & printed,*" you would have known that I solicited the Govt. as early as June 1814, when I forwarded to it information of the assemblage of a British force at Pensacola, for permission to drive them from that rendezvous before their reinforcements could arrive, & to disperse the Indians whom they had organised there; & altho, the order requested was issued in July 1814 it never reached me till after the declaration of peace. From your "*verbal, written, & printed*" information, you might also have ascertained, that I kept the Govt. advised of the preparations of the British in Pensacola to attack Fort Boyer & thro th't point to invade the country, & that I again entreated the Govt for orders to attack them—no answer from the Govt— & that after the British did actually attack Fort Boyer & invade the country, & were repulsed, I again made the same intreaty of my Govt.—but it was still silent. I then informed it of the meditated attack by great Britain with all its combined force as early as the 27th. of August, when I appealed to the Patriotism of my old volunteers under the command of that brave officer Genl Coffee (having ordered before, all the Troops authorised by the Govt.) and with this force called for on my own responsibility marched to, & expelled the British from Pensacola; by which movement I frustrated the original plan of invasion thro Mobile, and by thus clearing my left flank of the enemy, was enabled to move to New Orleans, ordering on Genl Coffee's command to Baton Rouge; These were the men called, armed, and equiped, at my own responsibility that enabled me to save New Orleans. Tho my friendship for Mr Monroe has been as sincere as yours or any other mans can be, I will ask in what history "*verbal, written, or printed,*" have you learned that he had any agency in all this, except writing to me on the 21st of Oct. not to march on Pensacola, that the Govt. was about to negotiate with Spain Xc Xc—and I would ask you as a military man whether negotiation then with Spain would have prevented invasion on the part of great Britain had I not have driven her force from Pensacola

X c destroyed her Indian allies—But these facts were forgotten in your *unofficial* zeal, X c in your *wine-drinking*. I cannot but marvel what connection there is between Mr Monroe and the Presidential canvass in your mind, that period you should seek to adorn him with plumage which I know he could not consent to wear—To proceed however with the historical facts "*verbal, written, and printed*."

"So soon as I had cleared my left flank of the enemy, having ordered Genl. Coffee across to Baton Rouge, without the *means provided, the information given, or the orders sent,*" of the Govt. I repaired to Orleans reaching that place on the first day of Decembr, 1814. Now I hazard the assertion, without the fear of contradiction, that you have never seen, read, or been verbally inform?? by Mr Monroe, or any other person of truth, that ever Mr Monroe wrote, or sent me an order prior to the date of my arrival at New Orleans; & that from the 20th of Novbr. 1814 untill the 18th of February 1815 I ever recd a single line from the Department of War; and as you are so conversant with history "*verbal, written, & printed,*" I regret in your zeal for truth that you did not read mine in answer to the letter of the 10th of Decbr 1814 that moment recd. But further, on my arrival at Orleans I found the arsenal empty of all the materials for vigorous & ample defence against such an overwhelming invading enemy, well armed, and supplied for attack—no arms, & what was still worse, no flints for the few arms to put into the hands of the militia. What was to be done? requisitions had been made in Septr. 1814 F acknowledged, and the agent at Pittsburgh had promised to have them forwarded, till the Steam Boat arrived from Pittsburgh with no arms, no fixed ammunition, no flints, no ordinance, or ordinance stores, & the report was that those supplies altho offered to be brought by the steam boat at 75 cents pr Cwt was intrusted to a peddling merchant at 50 cents pr Cwt. with the permission to sell, or barter, his goods on the way, all which, as you have read much, you might have seen on record in the war office where the trial of Mr Maples before a court martial ought to be found. Thus situated, I was advised that the Barrito? rions had flints arms & were willing to surrender themselves and all their supplies on condition of promise of pardon on good conduct. I directed Mr Livingston my voluntary aid to accept them, & give the Pledge. This was done & I obtained 7500 pistol flints, which were put into the arms obtained for the militia and contributed much to the defence of the city. Now I will again ask what agency had Mr Monroe in all this that it should be said his energetic orders raised the *means for the defence* of New-Orleans. These means were procured by myself & my agents, & enabled me to make the defence I did. I would be the last man in the Union to strip Mr Monroe of the credit to which he is entitled, & have no doubt he Issued orders for the requisitions, & for the supply of arms, but in a military point of view it is not only necessary for the Superior to order but to see his orders executed. Besides, the Govt. did know, & was informed in the latter end of Septr. or first of Octr. 1814 that the Tennesseans X c Kentuckians would march, but could not be armed—in consequence the 5000 st oc an d was sent to Pittsburgh X c might have been brought to me in due time in the steam boat; bnt for the pittance of 25 cents pr

cwt were detained, X c our country thereby Jeopardised, and would probably have been lost, had it not have been for the provident i al supply obtained from the Barrit o a rions.

I have therefore to request when on your electioneering tours, 3 Jackson was fit for any station. Some other answered, that fighting no one battle could be proof of fitness for high civil stations. The reply was, that it was not the fighting of the battle alone but also providing the materials & preparing the means for it—that this had been left to his unaided exertions—the War Department having neglected to make the preparations & left him without arms means or money.—I think I had not before this, taken part in the conversation—but considering this view of the subject as extremely unjust to Mr. Monroe who had been Secretary of War at the time, to whom I have long professed a strong personal attachment, and for whose virtues I felt reverence, as I did gratitude for his services to the Country—I thought it my duty to say in substance that my impression of what had occurred, at that period, was different—that I did not think Genl J. had been left in the manner represented—that all which could be done, had been done, after Mr. Monroe came into the Department—that his exertion & devotion to his duties at that time, had nearly destroyed his life—that he early discovered or foresaw that N. Orleans would be attacked—& informed Genl Jackson of it—and provided such troops & arms as he could to meet the emergency—that he had learned that Genl J's health was bad, & he & the President were extremely anxious, lest this cause should induce him to return to Tennessee, or he should remain so long in Florida as to prevent him from reaching N. Orleans in time to prepare for its defence—that urgent and pressing letters were sent to hasten him to that point—and that I beleived the means provided, the information given & the orders sent, enabled Genl. Jackson to fight the battle & to fight it successfully—that without Mr. Monroe's exertions it could not probably have been won, as it was won. But I did not deny to you the merit of fighting the battle well; or making every possible exertion to prepare for it—nor fail to give you the high praise which was your due. My object was to vindicate Mr. Monroe, and was not then, nor has it been, at any time, to depreciate your military exploits. They form a part of our national glory which I have no inclination to tarnish.

It is not improbable, that Colo. Gray did ask where the letters or orders which I mentioned, were to be found—and that I did answer that I could not tell except it might be in the War Dept.—but that I understood, & had no doubt, that they did exist.

You will not, after this narrative, expect me to give the name of any informer—My information, whether correct or otherwise, was derived from the various sources, verbal, written & printed, from which my knowledge of the history of that day is drawn.

As you request, I shall enclose this letter to Genl Houston that he may forward it. I am Sir respectfully
&c. SAML. L. SOUTHARD.

Genl. Jackson

Washington, 9th Feby 1857

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or at your wine drinkings hereafter, you will not fail to recollect these historic a l facts, which indeed you ought long since to have known from the *verbosities, writings, F printings* of the times—and that you will not forget to state that I never abandoned the eagles of my country in the day of trial and danger; nor ever failed to take upon myself the responsibility of driving from our shores, or from those of a faithless neutral, our declared enemy when I found it necessary for the safety of my country; and altho I admire the zeal you display for yo n u r friend, yet it ought to be recollected that an honorable man will never do injustice to another in that zeal. I am sure Mr Monroe from his love of truth (or I am much mistaken in him) would be the last man to say that he had given or written me an order to repair to Orleans of prior date to the time I reached that place—I always kept him advised of my situation intentionally, F movements, and mine of the 14th of Novbr. 1814 from Purees Block house F 20th of Novbr. from Mobile, as is believed, must have reached him before the 10th. of Decbr. was written, from the then expedition of the mail—mine being sent by express to the direct line of mail, which at that time travelled at the rate of 100 mi l es in 24 hours, F the dis closure tance to the city 1200 miles.

Having given you a *few* of the "*written, printed F verbal*" facts of the time alluded to, I close this correspondence, and am yr mo, obd't servt,

The Honble ANDREW JACKSON.

Saml L. Southard sec of the U.S. Navy.